



## LESSON 3

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# ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION

### READ ALOUD

*If you took ancient Egypt's two major trade routes and put them in the United States, one would stretch from Washington, D.C., to Chicago and the other from Washington, D.C., to the northern tip of Maine. These were large distances to travel by boat and caravan. But those distances did not keep Egypt from bringing in a fortune along those roads, as you will see.*

### Focus Activity

**READ TO LEARN**  
What made Egypt's civilization a rich one?

**VOCABULARY**  
empire  
expedition

**PEOPLE**  
Ahmose  
Hatshepsut  
Tutankhamun

**PLACES**  
Nubia  
Kush  
Punt  
Valley of Kings

### THE BIG PICTURE

While Egyptian civilization was spreading along the Nile, neighboring cultures were also growing. To the north, people in Europe were developing the islands and peninsulas across the Mediterranean Sea. To the west, other Africans were finding ways to survive in the harsh desert environment of the Sahara. To the south, the kingdoms of Nubia were thriving, due to gold mines and trade networks. To the east, Asian communities large and small were forming in what are today Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

Trade and movement of people and ideas helped to shape development in all of these cultures. Each culture had different resources, products, and ideas to exchange. Egyptian civilization affected neighboring areas. Other cultures had their effects on Egypt as well.

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## NEW RULERS IN EGYPT

Following the collapse of the Old Kingdom, a new era began in Egyptian history. Historians call this period, from about 2100 B.C. until about 1700 B.C., Egypt's Middle Kingdom.

During this time Egypt's contact with other parts of the world increased. For example, the pharaoh's armies conquered kingdoms in Nubia and made use of the area's gold mines. The name *Nubia*, in fact, may come from the Egyptian word *nub*, for gold. Find Nubia on the map on page 86.

Meanwhile Egyptian traders increased their business with cities in western Asia. As trade grew, people also began moving. People from Asia came to live in Egypt's Delta region. By 1650 B.C. these new settlers from the hills of western Asia, called Hyksos (HIK soh), were powerful enough to challenge the pharaoh.

## War with the Hyksos

For the next 100 years, the Hyksos—Greek for “rulers of hill-lands”—ruled Lower Egypt. The Hyksos people used horses, chariots, strong bronze weapons, and bows and arrows to defeat Egyptian armies in battle. However, Egyptian leaders at Thebes continued to control Upper Egypt.

Although they lost Lower Egypt, the Egyptians learned from their war with the Hyksos. In 1550 B.C., about 100 years after the Hyksos gained control of the Delta, Egypt rallied behind Pharaoh Ahmose (AH mohs). This time, with the help of weapons and chariots copied from the Hyksos, the Egyptians succeeded in taking back the Delta.

The defeat of the Hyksos began the period in Egyptian history called the New Kingdom. Pharaoh Ahmose vowed that outsiders would never again control any part of Egypt. Ahmose and later pharaohs set out to make Egypt the strongest military power in its part of the world.



Tomb walls often had paintings like this scene of the Egyptians fighting the Hyksos. At right is a model Egyptian army.



## EXPANSION AND TRADE

During the New Kingdom period, Egypt's leaders worked to win back the lands lost in war. Nubia had gained its independence, but now the armies of the New Kingdom conquered the valuable territory once more.

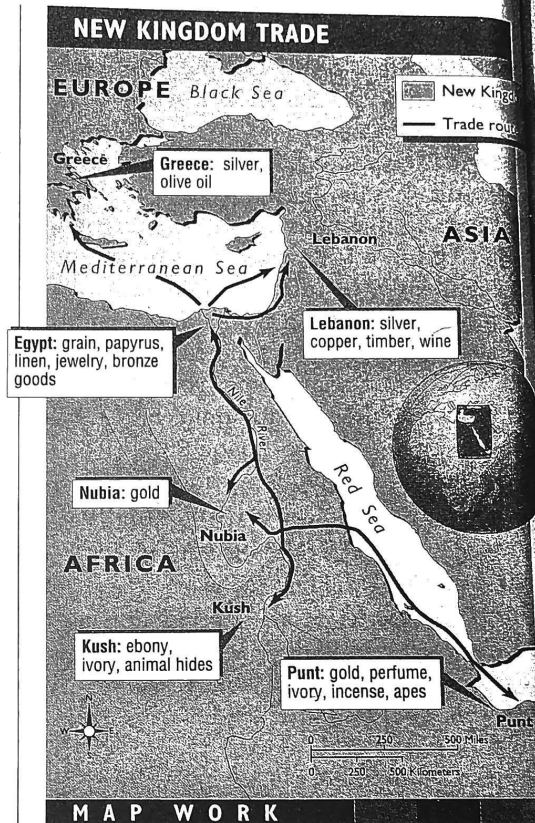
Egyptian armies also marched north-east, into what is today Israel, and took over that territory. They even pushed as far as the Euphrates River, the edge of another powerful civilization that you will read about in Chapter 5.

During the New Kingdom period, Egypt became an empire. An empire is a group of lands and peoples ruled by one government. Egypt's economy no longer revolved around farming along the Nile. The Egyptian empire now had other valuable resources from conquered lands.

### Across Land and Sea

Egypt's New Kingdom traders spread far and wide. Egyptian ships loaded with golden jewelry, linen cloth, and papyrus sailed to what are today Lebanon and Syria. The ships returned carrying silver, timber, and wine—rare treasures in the land of the pharaoh. Remains of oil jars and paintings from what is now Greece have been found in Lower Egypt. These artifacts suggest that Egypt also traded with its neighbors across the Mediterranean Sea.

Egypt's most important trading partner, however, lay to the south. When the pharaoh's armies conquered Nubia, they also gained control of the ancient and wealthy kingdom of Kush (KUSH). Kush controlled rich trade routes to other African kingdoms. Trade goods came from parts of Africa even farther south. The kingdom of Kush traded ebony, leopard skins, and elephant



During the New Kingdom, Egypt drew upon resources from far and wide.

1. What goods did Egypt get from Kush?
2. Which two places were sources of ivory?
3. How did Egyptian traders travel to Greece?

ivory. Elephant ivory is ivory from elephant tusks. Kush also owned reserves of gold, copper, and precious stones.

Caravans of men and pack animals brought these treasures out of Kush and back to Egypt. On some trading trips, it took 150 men just to carry all of the gold bars that were being sent to Egypt. Soldiers traveled with trading caravans to keep the pharaoh's treasures safe from bandits. Large, castle-

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like forts were also built along the Upper Nile to scare away robbers.

Back in Egypt, craftworkers made raw materials into beautiful objects. These included furniture, jewelry, and other fine goods for the pharaoh and Egypt's wealthy families.

### Hatshepsut

One pharaoh expanded Egyptian trade well beyond the boundaries of the Egyptian empire. That pharaoh was one of Egypt's few female rulers. Her name was Hatshepsut (hat SHEP soot), "Foremost [first] of the Noble Ladies."

Hatshepsut was a princess and the wife of a pharaoh. She seized the chance to become pharaoh herself when her husband died. Her young stepson was supposed to become the new pharaoh of Egypt. Hatshepsut proclaimed, however, that the ten-year-old boy was too young to rule on his own. In this way she succeeded in being named co-ruler.

### Hatshepsut's Trading Journey

In the eighth year of her reign, Hatshepsut organized the biggest trading expedition of her career. An expedition is a group of people who go on a trip for a set reason. The goal of Hatshepsut's expedition was to trade with Egypt's neighbors to the south in Punt. Historians think Punt may have been in what is today Ethiopia or Somalia. Look at the map on page 86. Find the place where the kingdom of Punt is believed to have been located.

The huge caravan of scribes, soldiers, artists, and attendants set off along a dusty road that led east to the Red Sea. There they loaded their cargo

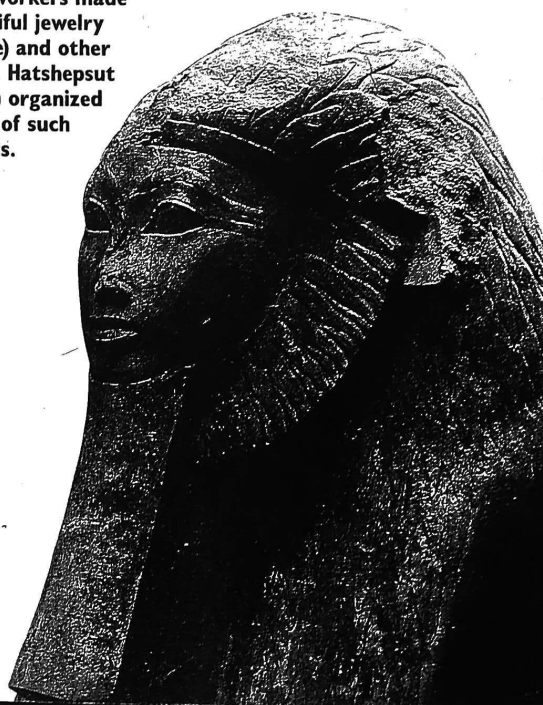
onto five sleek ships for the long journey south.

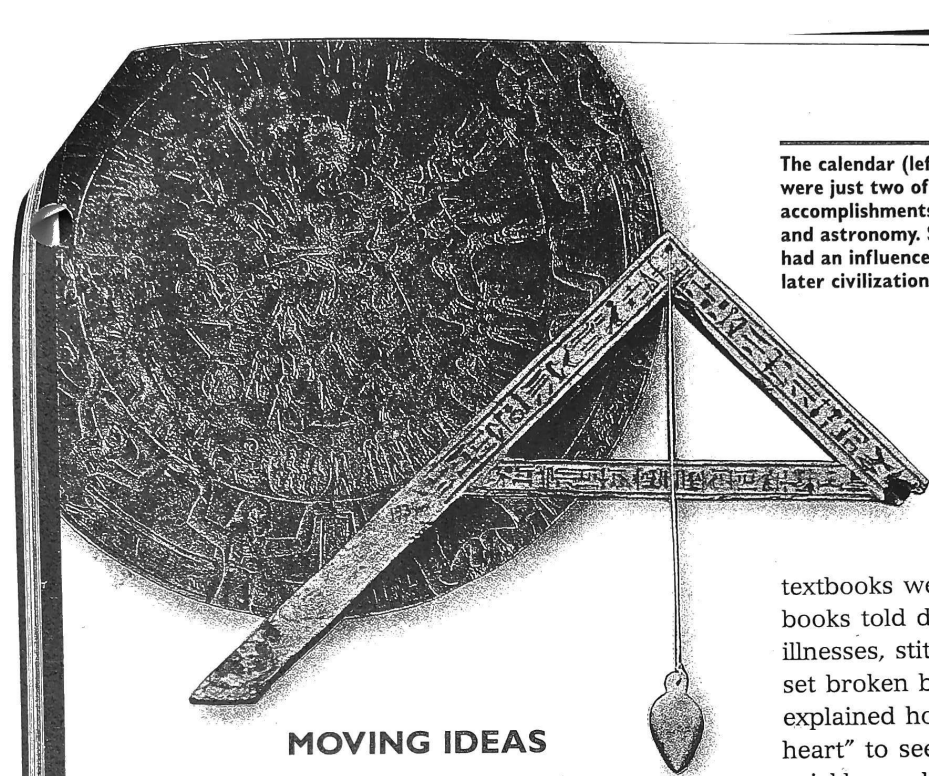
When they finally arrived in Punt, the ships were welcomed by the king and queen. Hatshepsut's scribes then displayed the jewelry, papyrus, and bronze weapons the Egyptians had brought to trade. In exchange the pharaoh received gold, perfume, ivory, leopard skins, and even live apes. Hatshepsut's traders also received rare incense trees.

Incense trees produce a perfumelike smell.

After touring the kingdom of Punt, the Egyptians began to prepare for their return home. Scribes carefully recorded the exact numbers of goods loaded aboard the ships. Then the members of the expedition climbed aboard. They also brought with them several leaders from Punt who wanted to visit Egypt, which they knew as Khmet, to meet Pharaoh Hatshepsut. The expedition had lasted two years.

Craftworkers made beautiful jewelry (above) and other items. Hatshepsut (right) organized trade of such objects.





The calendar (left) and scale (below) were just two of the ancient Egyptian accomplishments in science, math, and astronomy. Such advancements had an influence on learning in other, later civilizations.

## MOVING IDEAS

In the time of the Egyptian empire, trade goods were not the only things that moved from place to place. Ideas and skills spread too.

You have already read how the Egyptians learned about new weapons from their old enemy, the Hyksos. Other cultures, in turn, learned from Egypt. Egyptian understanding of medicine, mathematics, and astronomy became famous in other countries. Records tell of a king in Lebanon who became sick. He insisted on being treated only by an Egyptian doctor.

### Medicine in Egypt

Most Egyptian doctors were actually priests who learned their skills in temple schools. The storehouse of medical knowledge in temple schools was vast and old. For thousands of years priests had noted different kinds of illnesses and injuries and what worked best in treating them. When writing was invented, scribes wrote down this knowledge. The world's first medical

textbooks were born! The medical books told doctors how to cure illnesses, stitch together cuts, and set broken bones. The books also explained how to "measure the heart" to see if it was beating too quickly or slowly. Do you know how to measure your own pulse?

Many ancient Egyptian cures centered around treatments that are no longer used. Many other cures, however, introduced ingredients that we still use today. Chamomile, an herb used to make tea, was used to calm upset stomachs. Moldy bread was often placed on wounds. This sounds terrible until we remember that modern antibiotics, or germ-killing drugs, are often made from certain kinds of molds!

### Math and Science

Along with medicine, Egyptian priests knew a great deal about mathematics. They developed the mathematical rules needed in building the pyramids, for example.

The priest-scientists also used their knowledge of math to understand the stars. Without telescopes, Egyptians identified five of the solar system's planets, which they called the "stars that know no rest." The mysterious

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darkness of eclipses did not scare priests. They had figured out that such events were just "meetings of the Sun and Moon."

### WHY IT MATTERS

These ideas and others spread throughout the Egyptian empire. In chapters to come you will learn how Egyptian culture influenced other civilizations.

The creation of an empire made Egypt one of the largest civilizations the world had ever known. With resources gained through new territories and trade, Egypt also became incredibly rich. Pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb has taught archaeologists much about the empire's riches. In the next lesson you will learn how the growth of the empire affected everyday life.

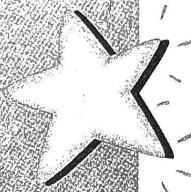
#### Links to SCIENCE

### How Many Days Off Is That?

How did ancient Egyptians invent a 365-day calendar?

They based the calendar on the yearly rising and setting of a star named Sirius. Each year Sirius shines in the sky for about 295 nights. Then the star disappears for 70 days. On the day it reappeared in the sky—just before the Nile began flooding—the Egyptians celebrated the start of a new year.

The Egyptian calendar was broken into 12 months of 30 days each. How many "left-over" days did Egyptians have as holidays each year?



### Reviewing Facts and Ideas

#### SUM IT UP

- Trade and war helped to link Egypt with its neighbors in the Sahara, Nubia, western Asia, and the Mediterranean.
- Egypt became an empire when it conquered Nubia, Syria, and Lebanon. These new lands gave Egypt a wealth of new resources upon which to draw.
- Pharaoh Hatshepsut expanded trade to a region of eastern Africa called Punt.
- The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 yielded hundreds of New Kingdom artifacts.
- The Egyptians' knowledge of medicine, math, and science became famous among their neighbors. Hyksos skills in metalworking became part of life in Egypt.

#### THINK ABOUT IT

1. Why were Egypt's leaders interested in conquering Nubia?
2. When was Tutankhamun's tomb discovered? What did archaeologists find there?
3. **FOCUS** In what ways was ancient Egypt a rich civilization?
4. **THINKING SKILL** Think about the different ways Egypt "grew" during the New Kingdom. What effects did this growth have on Egypt? How did Egypt affect its neighbors?
5. **GEOGRAPHY** Use the map on page 86 to trace an outline of Egypt and its trading partners during the New Kingdom. Then write in the resources of each territory.